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Summary record of the 2nd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 6 October 2003, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Belinga Eboutou (Cameroon)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 105: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/58/172, A/58/204)

Agenda item 106: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (A/58/3, A/58/61-E/2003/5, A/58/67-E2003/49, A/58/79, A/58/229, A/58/159, A/58/153 and AC.3/58/L.2)

Agenda item 107: Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/58/160)

1. **Mr. Ocampo** (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that he would speak about the importance of integrated social and economic policies. The General Assembly was meeting at a time when the world economic recovery was gaining traction after two years during which the mediocre growth of the world economy had impeded progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. It was also possible that the inevitable preoccupation with short-term economic considerations had distracted the international community from tackling the long-term, largely social, development objectives of the Millennium Declaration. The current challenge was to ensure that growth was equitable, pro-development and supportive of equality between men and women. To meet that challenge, social development goals should be fully integrated into economic policies, and an appropriate macroeconomic framework and appropriate development strategies should be formulated.

2. Social development and economic policies were closely linked. While social cohesion was an essential prerequisite for economic growth, a sound macroeconomic environment was a necessary condition for a successful social policy. Just as productive strategies should include tools to pursue the goals of social development, social policies should focus on supporting an inclusive growth process beneficial to the most underprivileged groups.

3. Authorities responsible for macroeconomic policies had frequently not been accountable for the social effects of their decisions. To remedy the situation, participants in the World Summit for Social Development held at Copenhagen had committed themselves to including in structural adjustment programmes three goals: poverty eradication, employment growth and social integration.

4. Social progress was the result of three basic factors: a long-term social policy aimed at ensuring integration, sufficient economic growth to ensure quality employment for women and men, and the reduction of productivity gaps between the various activities and economic actors. Despite its advantages, globalization had aggravated the problems in all of those areas. Three-pronged social strategies, addressing education, employment and social protection, were essential to remedial action.

5. Education was not only a right but also the main means of salvaging marginalized adults and children from poverty. Developing countries should therefore increase resources allocated to education, giving particular emphasis to the education of girls in order to redress the current gender inequalities.

6. Progress in the area of education could be a vain achievement, if quality employment lacked, as it seemed to do under the current economic system. It was therefore necessary to upgrade work at the pace of technical development and, to that purpose, emphasize vocational training, improve employee-employer relations, ensure adequate social protection and implement a prudent minimum-wage policy - with a view to promoting social dialogue.

7. Regarding social protection, improved social security systems were key elements of an integrated approach to eradicating poverty and improving equity. Those systems should provide for universal coverage, particularly with regard to nutrition, health, ageing and unemployment. Addressing their differential impact on women should be a guiding principle, since women were beneficiaries but also commonly carried the burden of family and informal care when social security systems were absent or downsized.

8. Given the current lack of integration between social and economic policies, much attention had recently been focused on providing safety nets in

economic crises. Such safety nets should not substitute basic social policies but evolve into elements of a more permanent social security system.

9. Lastly, new institutions were required to support the development of integrated policy frameworks. Those institutions should also encourage social actors to speak for the poor, coordinate economic and social authorities, make the social effects of economic policy visible, and, most importantly, mainstream social objectives into economic policy-making. The lack of such institutions was a major impediment to progress in many countries.

10. Rising inequality was making the social integration goals of the World Summit for Social Development all the more difficult to achieve and were a fundamental condition for social progress and economic development.

11. Generally speaking, fuller progress in tackling the agenda of the World Summit for Social Development required, on a national, regional and international level, that priority should be given to more effective social investment. Progress toward achieving the eighth goal of the Millennium Declaration - building a global partnership for development - was especially pertinent. The most important components of that goal related to trade, debt relief and aid.

12. In sum, development was a complex pursuit that could not be approached from a purely technocratic vantage point. The Third Committee, as guardian of the social agenda, had a special responsibility in ensuring that the agenda was better understood and effectively translated into action.

13. **Mr. Schölvinck** (Director, Division of Social Policy and Development) introduced eight reports of the Secretary-General to the Third Committee.

14. Drawing the Committee's attention to agenda item 105, entitled "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly", he said that the Secretary-General's report under the same title (A/58/172) brought to the attention of the Committee the agreed conclusions on national and international cooperation for social development, adopted by the Commission for Social Development at its 41st session and endorsed by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The report focused on two themes: coherence of policies to promote social development, and participation and partnership as objectives and means of social development. Several recommendations had been proposed in the report, including the meaningful integration of economic and social policies on all levels of decision-making, the effective involvement of developing countries in international decision-making and norm-setting, the coherent reinforcement of international cooperation, and the active involvement of all actors in the development processes.

15. Referring to agenda item 106, entitled "Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family", the speaker said that the Secretary-General's report entitled "Review and Appraisal of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons" (A/58/61) presented the results of the fourth five-year review and appraisal of progress in the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. The report emphasized that the advancement of equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities would require innovative approaches that could yield concrete results; and included recommendations highlighting the need to promote the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of development, mainstream the disability perspective into development policy and development activities and coordinate activities among various organizations and departments of the United Nations. The speaker encouraged the regional groups that had not already done so to make their nominations to the Working Group (whose establishment had been proposed by Mexico to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session) of the Ad hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, which.

16. The Secretary-General's report entitled "Preparations for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004" (A/58/67) described the preparations for the observance of the tenth anniversary of the Year in 2004 on the global, regional and national levels and made suggestions for the observance of the anniversary. Governments were encouraged to promote the full participation of all segments of society and research on family-related issues, raise awareness of such issues, and formulate national strategies for enhancing the well-being of families beyond 2004.

17. The speaker said that the major United Nations conferences of the 1990s had shown that the family took different forms in various cultural, political and social systems and that the traditional definitions of the family were undergoing profound change as a result of migration and urbanization, decreasing fertility and the ageing of populations worldwide. The observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family would help to raise awareness of family issues and to build the national capacities for formulating appropriate policies.

18. The third report under agenda item 106, entitled "Note by the Director General, transmitting the world youth report" (A/58/79), comprised two sections. The first section contained a review of the current situation of young people worldwide and was based on the findings of the Expert Group Meeting on Global Priorities for Youth, held at Helsinki in October 2002. The second section of the report presented an evaluation of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations system, last held at Dakar in August 2001. The findings were based on a questionnaire circulated to all Member States and surveys sent to all Forum participants. The report recommended in particular that any future sessions of the World Youth Forum should be directly linked to an intergovernmental process.

19. The fourth report, entitled "Promoting Youth Employment" (A/58/229), discussed the progress made in the Youth Employment Network since the first meeting of the High-Level Panel of the Youth Employment Network in July 2001. At that meeting, the High-Level Panel had provided a straightforward political message summarized in four principles: employability (investing in education and vocational training for young people and improving the impact of those investments), equal opportunities (giving young women the same opportunities as young men), entrepreneurship (making it easier to start and run enterprises to provide more and better jobs for young women and men) and employment creation (placing employment creation at the centre of macroeconomic policy). Those recommendations had been discussed by the General Assembly in the overall framework of the follow-up to the Millennium Summit.

20. A key recommendation of the High-level Panel had been a call to countries to volunteer to be "lead" countries to champion youth employment action plans. So far, eight countries had volunteered. An important step had been the establishment of the Secretariat of the Youth Employment Network.

21. The Secretary-General's report entitled "Cooperatives in Social Development" (A/58/153) highlighted the progress that had been achieved in promoting a supportive environment for cooperative development and the contribution of cooperatives to the eradication of poverty, the generation of full and productive employment and the enhancement of social integration. An important element on the national level had been the particular efforts put forth to revamp cooperative regulations and legislation in light of the United Nations guidelines aimed at creating a supportive environment for the development of cooperatives. Several proposals were contained in the section entitled "Conclusions and proposals for further action" at the end of the report.

22. Lastly, the "Report on the World Social Situation, 2003" (A/58/153), which it had only been possible to release a few days earlier due to unforeseen circumstances, represented a collective effort of the staff of the Division for Social Policy and Development in bringing topical social issues and concerns to the attention of the international community, experts and society at large. Since 2001, the Report was no longer published quadrennially but biennially. It also had new features of substance, such as a thematic approach and the formulation of explicit policy recommendations.

23. The theme chosen for the 2003 Report was social vulnerability. The main emphasis was on the challenges of the social ...clusion of specific groups, in particular children and youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, migrants and persons in situations of conflict. A gender perspective had been incorporated in the analysis to the maximum extent possible. In view of the problems identified, the report contained policy recommendations along the lines of removing employment barriers, promoting social integration and social protection, protecting rights of all members of society and strengthening international cooperation. Greater market access for developing-country exports to developed economies and a credit policy facilitating business ventures by the various social groups were among the policy proposals.

24. Under agenda item 107, entitled "Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing", the Secretary-General's report entitled "Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on

Ageing" (A/58/160) was presented in response to resolution 57/167, in which the Assembly had welcomed the report of the Second World Assembly on Ageing and endorsed the Political Declaration and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. In that connection, the Assembly had welcomed the preparation of a road map for the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action by the United Nations programme on ageing, and invited all relevant actors to contribute to that preparation.

25. The report introduced the road map for the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. It highlighted the main gender aspects of the Madrid Plan, reviewed progress achieved in defining the modalities for the review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan, and outlined major developments during the first year of the implementation process. Lastly, it contained a number of recommendations presented to the Assembly for consideration.

26. The speaker noted that governments had recently been paying ever-greater attention to intergenerational aspects of policy development. It was increasingly recognized that policy-making was not a zero-sum game that traded the interests of one generation off against those of another. Rather, policies should meet the needs of all generations, and resources should be used to connect generations, each of which had a role to play in society. The Division of Social Policy and Development had adopted an intergenerational perspective that promoted communication among the various social groups.

27. The report also responded to General Assembly resolution 57/177, in which the General Assembly had stressed the importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective, taking the needs of older women into account in policy and planning processes on all levels.

28. Concluding, the speaker recalled that the Secretary-General in his statement at the opening of the General Assembly, referring to "so-called soft threats such as the persistence of extreme poverty, the disparity of income between and within societies, and the spread of infectious diseases...", had pointed out that the international community had come to realize "with chilling clarity, that a world where many millions of people" endured "brutal oppression and extreme misery" would "never be fully secure, even for its most privileged inhabitants".

29. The Committee had a particularly important role to play in confronting and overcoming those so-called soft threats. It was therefore regrettable that extreme poverty and income disparities were not part and parcel of the work of the Third Committee. The speaker hoped that the agendas of the Second and Third Committees would in future better reflect the need to integrate the social and economic realms of their respective remits.

30. **Mrs. Groux** (Switzerland) welcomed the fact that the Secretariat had taken the initiative to include in its report on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/58/172) the conclusions of the Commission for Social Development. That initiative was a step toward greater efficiency and better coordination in the work of the various United Nations bodies and organizations, and the speaker strongly encouraged the Secretariat to persevere in that direction.

31. **Mr. Roshdy** (Egypt) expressed surprise at the fact that the United Nations had dismantled the Family Unit while preparations for the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family were under way, and inquired about the reasons.

32. **Mrs. Ahmed** (Sudan), associating himself with the statement of the representative of Egypt, asked for detailed information on the activities that had been planned for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and stressed the family unit's fundamental importance to society. Referring to the World Youth Report (E/CN.5/2003/4), he expressed regret that so far only one ministerial conference had been held on youth issues and inquired of the Secretariat whether there were plans for a new government-level conference on that topic.

33. **Mr. Schölvinck** (Director, Division of Social Policy and Development), replying to the representative of Egypt, pointed out that his Division had a coordinator for family issues, and announced that special events, marking the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, would take place in New York on 4 December 2003. He stressed that initiatives should be taken on all levels - international, regional and local - and observed that the Member States were responsible for making the International Year of the Family known to their population.

34. Referring to the World Youth Forum, the speaker pointed out that in his report (E/CN.5/2003/4, paragraph 80) he had recommended holding a new forum, and it therefore was up to the General Assembly to decide whether action should be taken on that recommendation.

35. **Ms. Elisha** (Benin), unsatisfied with the reply of the Director of the Division of Social Policy and Development, requested detailed information on the special events planned for commemorating the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

36. **Ms. Al Haj Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic), also unsatisfied with the reply that had been given, inquired whether the Family Unit had been definitively dismantled and requested the Director of the division to state clearly his intentions on that matter.

37. **Ms. Noman** (Yemen) associated herself with the statements of the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic and Benin, and asked the Director of the division for additional explanations and details.

38. **Mr. Roshdy** (Egypt) asked for a description of the duties of the coordinator mentioned by the Director of the division and inquired about the number and hierarchical position of the United Nations staff handling family issues as such on a full-time basis.

39. **Ms. Maille** (Canada) welcomed the restructuring that had been undertaken in accordance with new management practices and in line with the reform launched by the Secretary-General. That reorganization could only help the discussion of the agenda items. The representative also welcomed the fact that the gender perspective had been taken into account in the report on the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing and hoped that the approach would be generalized.

40. **Mr. Cumberbatch** (Cuba) asked the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs to specify the factors that, on the international level, could contribute to social development and to indicate whether the formulation of integration policies would necessitate new institutions.

41. **Ms. Bakalem** (Algeria) was concerned over the place that would be reserved to the family in the structure of the United Nations and requested details on that matter.

42. **Mr. Israfilov** (Azerbaijan) said that he too was preoccupied with the fate of the Family Unit and asked for a detailed report on the reasons behind such staffing restrictions.

43. **Mr. Schölvinck** (Director, Division of Social Policy and Development), replying to the various speakers, stated that his division was not neglecting the family issue but on the contrary endeavoured to integrate it into all parts of its work. The international community had adopted specific action programmes for all of its other areas of activity - youth, older persons and persons with disabilities - and those sectors were subject to comprehensive legal frameworks. It was only for the family that no such programme existed, notwithstanding preparations to observe the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

44. Regarding the size of the staff of division units, the Director pointed out that small units could carry out several activities. Referring to the coordinator's duties, he said that, while the Family Unit used to consist of two posts (at the P-4 and P-2 levels), the division currently had one coordinator post at the P-4 level but all of the staff of the division contributed to the work concerning the family.

45. **Mr. Faati** (Gambia) said that mainstreaming social development objectives into economic policies, although a topic associated particularly with the Second Committee, also concerned the Third Committee. He therefore requested the representatives sitting on the Third Committee to express their views on how best to treat that issue under the terms of their mandate.

46. **Mr. Andrabi** (Pakistan) stated that the family, if its basic structure still met the definition given in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), deserved a central place in any discussion of social development issues. It was therefore surprising that the Family Unit had been reduced to a mere coordinating activity, and the representative asked about the grounds for such a decision, adding that clearly they could not be related to scarcity of resources.

47. **Mr. Alaei** (Islamic Republic of Iran) expressed surprise at the dismantlement of the Family Unit by the Secretariat, while on the contrary that unit should have been strengthened, and thought that the reasons behind the decision had not been stated clearly. Since measures promoting the family were already being

mainstreamed into all ongoing action programmes for women, children, social development, youth and population, it was pointless to adopt a special programme on the family. The speaker urged that the Secretariat's further work in that area should be carried out through the Family Unit.

48. **Mr. Roshdy** (Egypt) asked for a clarification: had the Director of the Division of Social Policy and Development actually stated that he ignored the number of Secretariat staff-members working full-time on family issues? He also expressed surprise at the elimination of the Family Unit after ten years of operation. The family was the fundamental social unit, and as such could not be sacrificed on the two grounds cited, namely lack of a specific action programme on the family and insufficient resources. Accordingly, the representative asked for a re-examination of the arguments put forward.

49. **Ms. Al-Maleki** (Qatar) regretted that the United Nations did not pay sufficient attention to the family, thought that the Secretariat's message contradicted the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, and urged that any coordinator posts should be established as part of the Family Unit.

50. **Ms. Groux** (Switzerland), repeating the opinion of the representative of Canada, called for a comprehensive and integrated approach to social development issues, and said she was satisfied that the Secretariat had taken such an approach in the restructuring exercise. Concerning the tenth anniversary of International Year of the Family, the representative reminded Member States of their commitment, according to General Assembly resolution 50/142 (A/RES/50/142), to take initiatives on the local and national levels for observing that event, and asked how many delegations had taken the trouble to respond to the relevant questionnaire distributed by the Secretariat.

51. **Ms. Sonaike** (Nigeria), unsatisfied with the explanations given, joined the representative of Cuba in asking the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs to provide detailed information on social-development activities carried out by international organizations, over and above national initiatives.

52. **Mr. Bennouna** (Morocco), referring to agenda items 105 and 107 on behalf of the group of 77 and China, said that, as the Secretary-General had suggested, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Commission for Social Development and the various bodies of the United Nations system should be encouraged to assess the manner in which economic and social policies were integrated.

53. It was essential to enhance international cooperation, assistance and solidarity in order to help the developing countries to face the negative effects of increasing globalization and to use its economic, trade, financial and social advantages.

54. In respect of employment, strategies should aim at social and economic objectives such as poverty reduction, social integration, development of economic networks, promotion of gender equality, promotion and upholding of workers' rights and increase of productivity in urban and rural areas. More substantial international cooperation, enhanced technical assistance and enlarged technology transfers would ensure developing countries a human potential qualified enough to contribute to sustainable development.

55. Partnerships formed between developed and developing countries should help to attain the objective of ensuring that developed countries allocated 0.7 percent of their GNP to official development aid (ODA). Such partnerships also required the enhanced participation of developing countries in international economic decision-making processes for greater transparency within international financial organizations. The Group of 77 and China fully endorsed the recommendation of the Secretary-General in that regard. They also welcomed ECOSOC's adoption of a resolution on the achievement of the social goals of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and hoped that the General Assembly would follow suit.

56. Concerning older persons, the speaker recalled the commitments made by the international community during the Second World Assembly on Ageing and under the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, and announced that the Group of 77 and China was examining the modalities for a follow-up mechanism to the Second World Assembly on Ageing and would present that contribution during the current session.

57. **Mr. Cavallari** (Italy), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the acceding countries, the associated countries and the Member States of the

European Free Trade Association (EFTA) aligned themselves with his statement.

58. The European social model was based on good economic performance, a high level of social protection and education, and social dialogue. The 2003 Spring European Council had reaffirmed, as a top priority, the promotion of sustainable development through stronger cohesion throughout the Union's Member States, the creation of more and better jobs and the application of a series of principles calling for gender equality, non-discrimination, integration, participation, social cohesion and social protection.

59. The private sector played an important role in social development and special attention should be given to the Global Impact initiative and its nine universal principles.

60. In the Declaration of the Council and the Commission of 20 November 2000 on the European Community's development policy, poverty reduction had been designated a priority area, in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

61. The European Union strongly supported the work of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in promoting a common approach to social development and to forging appropriate partnerships on the international level. Managing globalization required an integrated approach encompassing social, economic, employment and environmental policies with full involvement of all stakeholders. Accordingly, the European Union in its Lisbon Strategy had set a new strategic goal for the next decade: to become a more competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. That integrated approach to globalization, based on annually approved structural indicators, was also crucial to a sustainable development strategy.

62. With regard to youth, the European Union reaffirmed its commitment to the "World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond" and its profound concern for the education, health, employment and participation of young people. In the White Paper on Youth, launched in 2001, the European Union had expressed its commitment to promote the active involvement of young people in the implementation of the policies that concerned them. The European Union encouraged cooperation among governments on that matter, particularly on a regional level, and therefore agreed with the conclusions of the Secretary-General's report (A/58/229), recognizing the importance of the Youth Employment Network.

63. The European Union welcomed the tenth anniversary of International Year of the Family, to be launched in December 2003, and invited the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to integrate the family perspective into the relevant policies, encouraging regional and sub-regional cooperation and partnerships with nongovernmental organizations. Special stress should be put on the individual rights of all family members, including children; on demographic changes; and on gender equality, both within the family and in economic, social and political activities in general. The European Union strongly supported the promotion of women's participation in the labour market and the reconciliation of work and family life. The speaker recalled that the family represented an important means of preventing poverty, marginalization and social exclusion.

64. Concerning older persons, the European Union attached great importance to implementing the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (2002) on a national and local level and, along the lines of the Berlin Regional Implementation Strategy, on a regional level. Older persons made important social contributions and should not be neglected. Ageing called for measures aimed at encouraging and enabling older workers to stay in the labour force, ensuring the social adequacy and sustainability of pension systems. Older persons should also be helped to remain self-sufficient and preserve their quality-of-life. Lastly, the European Union had given the issue of persons with disabilities priority within its own activities and in the United Nations and proclaimed 2003 "European Year of People with Disabilities". It was convinced that the issue of their rights should be integrated into all relevant government policies and that the use of currently existing instruments, such as the conventions on human rights and the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities should be strengthened. A rights-based convention, ensuring the fundamental rights of persons with disabilities according to the principles set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, was called for. The European Union was working toward that aim in the Ad hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on Protection and

Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, and would contribute constructively, on the basis of the position paper presented in June 2003, to the activities of the Working Group set up to present a proposal for an international convention to the Ad Hoc Committee.

65. **Mr. Valle** (Brazil) said that the principles laid down by the World Summit for Social Development were reflected in the development strategies adopted in recent years by Brazil, which was resolved to implement the budget policy and economic reform that were indispensable for achieving social development without sacrificing immediate social goals. Accordingly, the Government had given priority to the establishment and maintenance of an extensive database on Brazil's poor population in order to ascertain the impact of social programmes, particularly poverty reduction and hunger eradication measures, scholarship programmes and incentive schemes for companies to hire workers in the 16-24 age group. Brazil, aware that other countries carried out similar national policies, encouraged their delegations to share information on those matters.

66. Referring to the report of the Secretary-General (A/58/172), the speaker recalled the need for consistency of national development strategies with global economic processes. Such consistency implied greater involvement of developing countries in the international economic decision-making process; precautions against excessive volatility in capital markets; easier access of developing-country products and services to developed-country markets, particularly in view of the disappointing outcome of the World Trade Organization meeting at Cancun; and wider access of developing countries to essential medicine at affordable prices. That last point had been the object of growing interest to Brazil, which had submitted to the Commission on Human Rights two relevant draft resolutions (2003/28 and 2003/29) that had been adopted.

67. Brazil approved of the attention that was paid to the role of the family, ageing, persons with disabilities and youth. It had adopted new measures for older persons, ensuring that they would all have access to health-care schemes, transportation and leisure activities; and supported the integrated approach proposed by the Secretary-General in those areas.

68. **Mr. Elmiger** (Switzerland), referring to agenda item 105, recalled Switzerland's resolve to promote social development but stressed that a country could do nothing alone: all Member States should commit to promoting the priorities that the international community should establish and the instruments that it would choose as a means of ensuring social development.

69. In particular, the States bore the main responsibility for implementing the commitments made at Copenhagen, and reiterated and reinforced at Geneva; enhancing the complementarity of national and international cooperation and of economic and social policies on the national and international levels; establishing transparency in managing and funding social development with a view to generating employment and improving working conditions; integrating the approaches taken on migration issues and on national employment policies; promoting social dialogue and up-scaling the responsibilities of the social partners and civil society; and promoting the active involvement of all stakeholders in the process of sustainable social development with a view to establishing international and national partnerships on a voluntary basis.

70. To the international community, which had to seek synergies among the various activities, the integrated follow-up of major conferences and summits was a highly efficient means for promoting economies of scale on a national and international level and avoiding setting objectives too difficult to attain in a constantly evolving world. Accordingly, Switzerland concurred with the recommendations to the Committee contained in the Director-General's report (A/58/172) and ascribed particular importance to measures taken to enhance coordination for an effective involvement of developing countries in the international economic decision-making process. Such involvement would facilitate their access to the global market and harmonize initiatives addressing Africa, particularly on social issues and under the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), an instrument that could serve as a model to other regions of the world. Switzerland also ascribed importance to the promotion of a culture of democracy, peace and conflict prevention.

71. **Mr. Balarezo** (Peru), referring to agenda item 105 on behalf of the Rio Group, noted that the World Summit for Social Development had in particular

helped to recognize the multiple nature of poverty as a global problem and the necessity to focus on sustainable development centred on the human being. The international community should give priority to social development, while promoting the convergence of economic and social policies.

72. The Millennium Summit had helped to define development goals aimed at promoting growth and reducing poverty. Economic and social development went hand in hand and required fulfilment of the responsibilities of the various governments and social sectors.

73. The International Conference on Financing for Development (ICFD) had allowed to stress the link between national economies and the global economic system, and the dependence of the success of national development efforts on a favourable international economic environment.

74. The Member States of the Rio Group believed that democracy and economic and social development were interdependent and reinforced each other. The recent aggravation of poverty in Latin America in conjunction with global economic stagnation constituted a serious threat to social peace and democratic institutions. Accordingly, the Rio Group renewed its commitment to follow up the application of the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

75. The Member States of the Rio Group believed that the Millennium Declaration, Agenda 21, the Monterey Consensus, the Johannesburg Declaration and the Cusco Consensus had an essential role to play in poverty reduction, combating social exclusion and its effects - particularly malnutrition and hunger among children - and the full inclusion of women in all aspects of the societies of its Member States.

76. Those objectives could be attained only through education and international cooperation, including assistance for development.

77. **Mr. Alcalay** (Venezuela) said that, to improve the population's quality of life, it was necessary to adopt policies reconciling social development, economic growth and environment protection. Numerous summits and conferences recently organized under the auspices of the United Nations had shown that the international community was aware of its potential role in solving the social and economic problems afflicting millions of human beings. Combating the perverse effects of globalization, which accentuated the disparities between developed and developing countries, required that the States lived up to their commitments.

78. In view of the problems of social inequality, the Venezuelan Government had formulated an economic and social development plan for the period 2001-2007 in order to improve living conditions and health care, reduce poverty, marginalization and exclusion, and distribute wealth better. It endeavoured to establish a new social order based on social justice, equity and citizen participation and upholding the dignity of all. To that purpose, it sought to democratize capital through the development of autonomous production activities, particularly in rural areas and with a view to ensuring food security, and by adopting adequate legal instruments and financial mechanisms.

79. In the period 1999-2003, despite the country's political problems, the policies, plans and programmes implemented had produced positive results. On the basis of recently enacted laws, Venezuela had formulated programmes for youth, the family, older persons and persons with disabilities. It also supported the preparation of an international convention on the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities and would participate in the working group set up to draft that convention in the next few months.

80. The speaker noted that, in his report on social development, the Secretary-General had formulated a series of recommendations on the necessity to integrate economic and social policies and ensure that the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) paid the necessary attention to that issue. Venezuela supported those recommendations and believed that the ECOSOC high-level debate and the General Assembly debates were particularly conducive to progress.

81. Lastly, the speaker announced that on 8-10 October 2003 the Organization of American States (OAS) would organize in Venezuela a high-level meeting on poverty, equity and social exclusion.

82. **Mr. Cumberbatch** (Cuba) proposed assessing the fulfilment of commitments made during the World Summit for Social Development by the various countries. Despite the promises that had been made, more than 1.2 million people survived on less than $1 per day, 800 million experienced hunger, 876 million were illiterate and 115 million children were not

enrolled in school. AIDS and malaria patients, children dying of avoidable illnesses, women perishing as a result of puerperal complications and persons without access to drinking water or health services were also in the millions. Those problems affected particularly the developing countries, unable to handle them after years of colonization and subjection to an unfair economic order. But also the developed countries were experiencing poverty: while they unsustainably consumed non-renewable resources and depleted the planet's wealth, social exclusion and the problems of access to health care, education and social security soared, and raising economic efficiency seemed to justify rising unemployment.

83. The developed countries had reduced official development aid (ODA), done relatively little to attenuate the external debt of developing countries and closed their markets to Third World exports. It was necessary for social development that the international community should fulfil commitments made at the major conferences and summits organized under United Nations auspices and cease to require the developing countries to limit their expenditure on health services, culture, education and social security.

84. On the basis of the principles of social justice and equity, Cuba had successfully implemented social development strategies for young people, people with disabilities and older persons - despite the blockade imposed by the United States for more than 40 years. In Cuba, every person had access to health services, infant mortality was low, children were vaccinated, the power network covered 95 percent of the country, 80 percent of the rural population had access to drinking water and the level of education was high according to UNESCO.

85. Cuba considered that the cooperation of the international community was essential to improving the social situation in the world with due consideration for local traditions and cultures. It sent health professionals to Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and Asia; offered scholarships to young persons from the Third World; promoted literacy; and carried out many other programmes. Such international cooperation could produce tangible results for millions of disadvantaged people. It was only in a spirit of solidarity and respect that it would be possible to resolve the serious problems of developing countries, implement an integrated social development and halt the enrichment of a small minority at the expense of the vast majority.

86. **Mr. Dube** (Botswana), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that SADC associated itself with the statement made by Morocco on behalf of the group of 77 and China. It considered the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly a priority. The Member States of the Community had collectively and individually undertaken to intensify their efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals and improve the coordination of the follow-up mechanisms for all major United Nations conferences.

87. The Community, still confronted with serious poverty, had put in place a regional indicative strategic development plan based on the twin pillars of good governance and sound economic management with a view to achieving a GDP growth rate of 7 percent per annum and halving the rate of poverty by 2015. The food security situation had also improved.

88. On the whole, the economic performance of the Community remained fragile, because much of GDP originated from only two production sectors, agriculture and mining. Although the failure of the World Trade Organization (WTO) talks at Cancun was a major concern, SADC remained optimistic that an agreement would be reached in Geneva by the 2004 deadline agreed at Cancun.

89. SADC was badly affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, whose impact was threatening the socio-economic progress achieved in the previous two decades. In order to address the problems caused by the pandemic, the SADC Heads of State and Government adopted at Maseru, Lesotho in July 2003 a declaration on HIV/AIDS highlighting the priority areas of action and decided to establish a regional fund for the implementation of the SADC HIV/AIDS Strategic Framework and Programme of Action, 2003-2007. The Community was grateful for the support that it had received from the United Nations and various countries and welcomed recent developments at the World Trade Organization (WTO), which would allow countries without pharmaceutical production capacity to import cheaper generic drugs.

90. SADC recalled that the part of the Copenhagen Declaration devoted to the acceleration of development

in Africa and the least developed countries (LDCs) concurred with the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in report A/58/172, and requested the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to enhance coordination and harmonization of initiatives within the United Nations.

91. With regard to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), SADC Member States were committed to integrating into their national development plans NEPAD priorities in areas such as agriculture, health information, communication and infrastructure development, and to increasing resource allocation to those areas.

92. The proposed International Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities was a major challenge facing the United Nations, although the concept of such a convention had been generally accepted and the preparatory process had started. SADC fully endorsed the outcome of the African Regional Consultative Conference, held in South Africa in May 2003, agreed to contribute as much as possible to the formulation of the Convention, and supported the participation of African disabled people's organizations (DPOs) in the process.

93. SADC recognized the vital contribution of older persons in keeping families and communities together in the face of HIV/AIDS and was committed to mainstreaming ageing into the relevant development programmes and policies. It also fully supported the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report entitled "Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing" (A/58/160).

94. **Mr. Roshdy** (Egypt) noted that since the concept of the right to development had been introduced in 1986, the international community had shown increasing interest in social development, which became the common denominator of all subsequent conferences organized under the auspices of the United Nations. The right to development was a fundamental right. Nevertheless, cultural diversity should be taken into account in economic and social policies, because no particular way of thinking was applicable universally.

95. The right to self-determination was a fundamental right closely linked to the right to development, emphasized in the Copenhagen Declaration. According to the documents on the evaluation of the implementation of that declaration, foreign occupation and violation of the right to self-determination impeded political, economic and social development. Although the United Nations should study ways to contribute to development, it was equally necessary to consider the situation of those countries that, in the 21st century, were still occupied by a foreign power and had no development prospects. It was appalling to see that destructive practices such as foreign occupation of territories, colonization and expulsion were still accepted by those that considered themselves to be champions of democracy and human rights in the combat against dictatorships.

96. It was imperative that the above countries should regain their sovereignty. No region could be stable under occupation. That was a simple fact that all, especially the occupying powers, should realize.

The meeting rose at 13.05 p.m.